

The Lehigh University Team

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Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf announced the grant on June 17 as part of the Manufacturing PA Innovation Program COVID-19 Challenge, which sought proposals from state colleges and universities for the rapid development and deployment of new technologies, products, and processes to positively impact the state's response to the coronavirus.

"We are fortunate to have some of the brightest minds in our higher education system, and they rose to the challenge in supporting our commonwealth during this unprecedented time," Wolf said. "My administration remains committed to identifying new resources that can support our state's businesses and communities as we continue to navigate this pandemic and the recovery steps ahead."

The Lehigh University team will be working in partnership with Solvay USA, an advanced materials and specialty chemicals company. They hope a product can be developed in the next six months for use against COVID-19, but also plan to continue their long-term research on the technology so it can be put to broader use beyond the pandemic.

Current disinfectants and cleaning agents must be applied on potentially contaminated surfaces after exposure by each individual, thus greatly limiting their usefulness, said Himanshu Jain, professor of materials science & engineering at Lehigh University.

The team hopes technology they are researching will be effective on surfaces prior to exposure, and will last for an extended period of several days, much longer than disinfectants and cleaning agents currently in common use, Jain said.

"If you really want to stop people from getting infected by touching surfaces, public areas have to be cleaned after every time somebody uses it; every time someone goes into a restroom at a restaurant, a laboratory, or a hospital room," he said. "If there was a longer-term solution that could last even a couple of days, the implications would be huge."

The team plans to coat the surfaces with selected cationic polymer, starting their research with plastic and stainless steel surfaces. The chemical composition and the coating method will be novel contributions of the team, which includes experts on virology, materials surface engineering, disinfection in healthcare, and virus de-

fection.

"This team was assembled in response to the COVID-19 situation, but the individual scientists on the team have all worked on different aspects related to viral infection, and have expertise that goes back many years," said Frank Zhang, associate professor of bioengineering and mechanical engineering & mechanics, who has previously done viral adhesion work related to the Ebola and Zika viruses.

Along with Jain and Zheng, the principal investigators of the project include Xu-anhong Cheng, professor of bioengineering and material science engineering at Lehigh University, and K. P. Ananth, professor and Director of Cosmetic Science Programs at the University of Cincinnati.

Other team members include Anand Jagota, professor and chair of Lehigh University's bioengineering program, and Yaling Liu, professors of bioengineering and mechanical engineering & mechanics at Lehigh.

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Slate Belt Y Distributes 720 Meals to the Slate Belt

By Michael Ortoski

WIND GAP - Last week Slate Belt Dir. Jen DeLong organized BBQ meal distribution for the communities of the Slate Belt. "We gave out 720 meals in two hours to our community in this time of need, it was amazing" said DeLong.

She had help from volunteers from Wast Management, Slate Belt Rising, Wind Gap Borough, Merchants Bank, Blue Valley Times, ESSA Bank Wind Gap Fire Co. whos building they used and more.

This was ther second food event. There may be more, read the Blue Valley Times for updates.



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Ken Field

Owner of Slate Belt Energy Services

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

Attic Schmatic

In case you ever wondered what it feels like to be on the other end of a service call on an air conditioner.

The access for many attics is a hatch in a bedroom closet. That would be fine if you just needed to pop your head up there every couple years to make sure raccoons hadn't set up shop there but it is not adequate to go in and out annually to service a piece of equipment. Most closets now have all kinds of shelving and storage built in them and even with an articulating ladder it is nearly impossible to get through that hatch. We have to do it with a bag full of tools. When we finally get into no-man's land it is usually a sea of insulation with nowhere to step safely. One wrong foot placement and you are in someone's bedroom or straddling a ceiling joist and speaking in a high voice. The fan unit is never near the opening. We come in from a bright sunny day and get in an attic with a light bulb 30 feet from where you need to work and of course it's blown out. Put on the headlamp and get to work in the 120° heat. Even in the darkness the flaws of many attic installations are evident to anyone but the homeowner or a home inspector. In the light of day it would be obvious that the installer should be in jail for such shoddy work.

Some attics have a deluxe entrance. By that I mean a ladder thing that comes out of the ceiling. They are actually called pull down stairs but most are made so poorly and installed so badly that it almost makes us want to see if there might be a hatch in a closet to use. One out of ten is cut to length properly and don't feel like a ride at the carnival when you ascend. Some need to have the stairs tightened before we can even go up. Many are worn out from the tons and tons of junk that has been carried up there and placed hoping aliens will come one day and remove it for examination. The metal arms are loose and bent and make horrible springy sounds when the stairs come down. I always envision a spring with hundreds of pounds of tension on it letting go and flying into my teeth. We didn't get to the air conditioner service part yet. That will have to wait until next week.

Ken Field is the owner of Field's Service, Inc. and Slate Belt Energy Services. He has over 40 years of experience in heating, air conditioning and is certificated by RESNET and BPI in various areas of energy conservation. He can be reached at 610-599-8832 or at www.SlateBeltEnergy.com

Schools Can Apply Now for Grants to Meet Health and Safety Needs of Students

By Vicki Wilken

ALLENTOWN – Local schools can apply now for funding through two new grant programs created last month to protect the health and safety of students, teachers and school employees during COVID-19, according to Senate Appropriations Chairman Pat Browne.

Lawmakers created the COVID-19 Disaster Emergency School Health and Safety Grants program in May as part of Act 30 of 2020. The program provides funding to address needs that have arisen due to the pandemic, including:

- The purchase of cleaning and sanitizing products;
- Training and professional development of staff on sanitation and infection prevention;
- Equipment purchases;
- Modifying school facilities to support appropriate social distancing of students and staff;
- Mental health services and support;
- Educational technology for distance learning or
- Other health and safety programs, items or services.

Eligible recipients include school districts, area career and technical centers, intermediate units, charter schools, regional charter schools and cyber charter schools.

"The General Assembly recognizes the needs and challenges our local schools districts are facing as they prepare for a return to in-person instruction," Senator Browne said. "This funding source will go a long way in providing the resources necessary for schools to meet these health and safety challenges and maintain a safe learning environment."

Each school district that submits a qualifying application will receive at least \$120,000 through the program, which is funded through Pennsylvania's share of money from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Successful applicants from area career and technical school, intermediate unit, charter school, regional charter school and cyber charter schools will receive an allocation of \$90,000.

Applications for the program are due June 30, and funding will be announced by July 15.

Through the COVID-19 Disaster Emergency Targeted School Health and Safety Grants program an additional \$7.5 million is available for intermediate units applying on behalf of nonpublic schools.

Applications for the program must be completed by July 8, and grant recipients will be announced by August 1.

Both programs are administered by the School Safety and Security Committee under the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. More information on the grants is available on the School Safety and Security Committee's website.

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